

# President To Approve Tax Breaks

## Clinton Denounces Democrat's Charge He Lacks Conviction

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President Clinton yesterday agreed to sign a Republican-sponsored tax break bill and angrily defended himself in a meeting with House Democrats against a charge that his reluctance to fight the GOP on all fronts leaves the impression that he lacks conviction.

More than 150 congressional Democrats and some of the president's aides had recommended he issue the first veto of his presidency to reject legislation that includes a multimillion-dollar tax break for media giant Rupert Murdoch. That break was attached to legislation in the Senate that reinstates and expands a tax deduction for self-employed workers who buy their own health insurance. It permits them to deduct 25 percent of the cost of the premiums for 1994 and 30 percent this year.

Clinton said the legislation is "good for the country" because of the health care insurance provision and for that reason he would sign it. But several Democrats had argued Congress would have stripped the Murdoch tax break out if the president had vetoed it and insisted on a clean extension of the insurance provision. They said he would be contributing to business-as-usual in Washington by agreeing to the bill.

Some House Democrats saw much political potential in vetoing the legislation and blasting Republicans for giving breaks to friends of House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). Gingrich has a book deal with Murdoch's publishing firm, HarperCollins, but has said he opposed the break and noted it was sponsored by

Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.).

The president was asked to veto the legislation at a White House session with four dozen House Democrats to discuss a wide range of issue. At the end of the meeting, Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-Tex.) told the president the public perceives he

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lacks conviction and will not stand firm for his principles, according to two attendees.

The two described Clinton as exploding in anger, recounting controversial positions he has taken the past two years and suggesting House Democrats who spent the last election cycle fleeing from him showed little of the conviction they were seeking from him.

But Clinton, attendees said, pledged that with the first 100 days of the GOP-controlled Congress over, he intended to press for a more focused, aggressive period in which to contrast Democratic ideas versus Republican ones. That process is billed as starting today with

Another congressional Democrat at the session, Rep. Bill Richardson (N.M.), said Clinton had "energized" the Democrats and he predicted the president would "take the gloves off, set forth a positive vision for the country" and contest the GOP. The American people, he said, "are waiting for him to make his case."

Clinton yesterday left the politicking to his press secretary, Michael McCurry. He launched a preemptive move on House Republicans preparing to accuse the administration of stonewalling Republican requests for information for congressional oversight hearings and inquiries.

McCurry said House GOP staffers and some of their congressional bosses were trying to "intimidate

a presidential address in Dallas, and continuing through April with extensive presidential travel and speechmaking and perhaps a prime-time news conference next week.

One congressional Democrat said Clinton lectured the group that they ought to start defending him and standing together on principle to provide a united Democrat front. "I've never seen anything quite like it," the legislator said of Clinton's burst of anger which this Democrat admired as a sign Clinton was going to launch a more aggressive offense. Many Democrats have been uncomfortable with Clinton's strategy of accepting some GOP proposals, trying to negotiate on others, and rejecting selected ones only at key moments and on big issues.

and harass the executive branch" by making overwhelming requests for information from agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the Justice Department, the Treasury Department and White House.

"We work hard to satisfy the legitimate inquiries of members of Congress," a stern McCurry intoned at his daily briefing. "But we will not accept or tolerate an effort by overzealous House staff members to use an oversight function to prevent us from doing the work the president has been elected to do."

McCurry cited congressional requests for information on the administration's Mexico aid package, but said that was one of several GOP

staffers were pursuing in an abuse of their oversight responsibility.

Republicans scoffed and cited two Democrats considered by Republican presidents to have raised oversight request to an art form: Michigan's John D. Dingell and California's Henry A. Waxman. Edward Gillespie, spokesman for House Majority Leader Richard K. Armey (R-Tex.), said, "In 12 years where Democrats controlled the House and Republicans controlled the White House, the House held 8,175 hearings on routine oversight matters. I think John Dingell would give us about a C-minus on oversight."



**REP. BILL RICHARDSON**

*... sees Democrats "energized"*